

P E N N S Y L V A N I A  
**ATTORNEY GENERAL**

**MIKE FISHER**



If you find alcohol, drugs or drug paraphernalia in your child's possession, there is a strong possibility that he or she is using illegal substances. This brochure lists behaviors that could be a warning sign that your child may be using drugs. While these symptoms may indicate drug use, they may also simply be signs of normal adolescent growing pains. A single symptom may not indicate an alcohol or drug problem, but a combination of two or more symptoms may indicate a problem.

For additional information related to the information in this or any other brochure presented by the Office of Attorney General, please contact our Drug Demand Reduction Unit at the following numbers.

**Harrisburg**

(717)705-0418  
(717)787-7953

**Allentown**

(610)791-6130

**Pittsburgh**

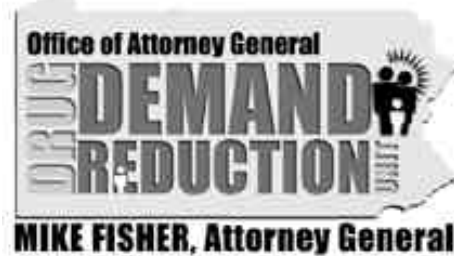
(412)880-0475

**Erie**

(814)871-4756

**Philadelphia**

(215)937-1376



[ddru@attorneygeneral.gov](mailto:ddru@attorneygeneral.gov)

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## *The following list is offered as early warning signs:*



***Drug abuse poses a threat to all families, and no child is immune from the drug epidemic. Three of the most dangerous words a parent can hastily utter in response to the drug problem are “not my kid.” While it is***

***my sincere hope that your child is not involved in using illegal drugs or alcohol, it is essential that as a parent you keep a watchful eye out to detect such use should it occur.***

***As the Commonwealth’s chief law enforcement official, I am hoping that the signs listed in this brochure will provide a useful guide of possible indicators of drug use by your child. By becoming informed, you have the best chance to prevent or at least recognize and confront drug use early on. Experts agree that it is through prevention and early intervention that we will ultimately win this war on drugs. And it is better for you to identify the problem long before the school, the police, or our narcotics agents do.***

### **It Could Save Your Child’s Life**

**Mike Fisher**  
**Attorney General**

#### **HOMELIFE:**

- Watered-down alcohol in the family liquor cabinet.
- Alcohol or marijuana smell on the child.
- Ignoring curfews; coming home intoxicated.
- Running away.
- Use of incense or room deodorizer to hide the odor of marijuana.
- Small pieces of screening missing from faucets, screens (to make pipes).

#### **PERSONALITY/MENTAL PROCESS:**

- Forgetting thoughts and ideas, and speaking in incomplete sentences.
- A personality change; abrupt changes in moods or a change in attitude.
- Loss of interest in hobbies, sports or extracurricular activities.
- Change in friends, or friends that parents don’t meet.
- Irritability; withdrawing from family.
- Unusual flare-ups of temper or explosive verbal anger episodes.
- Heightened secrecy about actions and possessions.
- Speech that is slurred, garbled, expressionless.
- Irregular thought patterns indicating impairment of cognition, memory or attention abilities.
- Strange and bizarre thinking, hallucinations, paranoia, suspiciousness, depressed or suicidal thoughts.

#### **PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:**

- Use of eye drops to reduce eye redness or unusual use of sunglasses.
- Sudden preoccupation with mouthwash or breath spray.
- Shortness of breath; chronic hacking cough, odor on clothes or breath.
- Change in appetite; weight change; craving for sweets.

- Runny nose; increased susceptibility to infections and colds.
- Bloodshot eyes, puffy face, tired look.

#### **MONEY/SPENDING HABITS:**

- Weight scales, baggies, tin foil, vials.
- Increased borrowing of money from parents or friends; amounts of money missing from around the house; stealing from home, school, or employer.
- Unaccounted for cash, especially in small denominations.

#### **HYGIENE:**

- Sudden use of strong perfume or cologne to cover the smell of drugs or alcohol.
- Less attention paid to cleanliness of body, hair and clothes. Paint under fingernails.

#### **CRIMINAL:**

- Being stopped by the police or arrested for possession of alcohol under age, driving under the influence, or use of a phony ID.
- Arrests for vandalism, shoplifting, breaking and entering, joy riding, etc.

#### **SCHOOL:**

- A moderate drop in school grades, even a drop of a single average grade level.
- School behavior problems.
- Talk about dropping out of school.
- Drop in school performance, truancy, resentment of teachers and authority figures, reduced ambition, avoiding schoolwork. A general lack of interest and short concentration span in school.
- Sleeping through or skipping school classes or days.
- Drug-oriented graffiti on school books or notebooks.